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Earned Leisure -- Well Spent.

A radio talk by Miss Ella Gardner, Extension Service, broadcast Wednesday, July 6, 1938, in the home demonstration period, National Farm and Home Hour, by 30 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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Do you ever feel sorry for yourself, feeling quite sure that you are the household drudge? Are you starved for music and books and the things you have always enjoyed doing? Do you long to run off and leave the family to find its own bathing suits and tennis rackets? What can you do about it? This isn't an advertisement for an amazing elixir of life but the opening attack in a brief debate with you on the subject of you and your leisure.

I can hear you protest, "That's just the trouble. I have no leisure, I wouldn't feel as I do if I could take a vacation once in a while." Why don't you? Business places and industries have found that it is good economy to limit working hours and to insist that their employees take two weeks of vacation each year. It makes for more work of a better quality and less irritation and mistakes. Mothers of families need the same kind of relief from the routine and responsibility of their work.

"But," you may say, "there is no money for a vacation for me and anyhow I wouldn't want to run off and leave the children." Perhaps you should leave them but we shall consider that later. Let us talk over the expense first. It isn't always necessary to use money to get a change in routine.

In Wisconsin a homemaker with three little girls agreed with her husband one New Years Day that hereafter they would reserve the evenings for themselves, wisely reasoning that the two of them would have to face many years of life together after the children were grown and that they were speedily forgetting their friends and all the things they used to enjoy doing together. The hours after the children were in bed were no longer used for darning, mending, worrying over accounts, and pursuing unplanned reading. Friends were entertained, books were read and shared, the husband and wife visited together, or worked alone on the things each most enjoyed. Her husband took up choir work again and she joined a book lending group. Occasionally a high school girl was paid to come in to spend the evening while they went to a movie or to visit with friends. These interests cost very little in cash and returned rich interest in renewed friendships and personal satisfactions.

The longer vacation does present financial as well as management problems. The farm homemakers who attend vacation camps work out many methods of arranging for the family's care. A sister comes from town with the children and keeps house for a week then leaves her youngsters on the

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farm for the following week and has a jaunt with her husband. In many cases the older children assume the responsibility for their mother's duties. They find great satisfaction in the confidence in them that her going away indicates. Grandmothers and other relatives are often called in to take the homemaker's place if the children are so young that they will be an undue load on their father's mind.

Getting away for a breathing spell has many advantages. The homemaker returns with a new point of view, with a much better idea of the unimportance of many minor matters and a far deeper appreciation of some important ones. The family sees her with new eyes for a little while, recognizes her value and perhaps, if she is very wise, keeps some of the independence that they may have achieved in her absence.

"But we have a grand time together whenever we get a chance" you may protest. Then do make many chances. Go on little adventures often and continue to go or to send your boys and girls with their friends as the family grows up. Your family probably is one of those that knows how to find the fun in simple things. A homemaker in South Dakota described the puppets she, her husband, and her youngsters have made of knotted cloth and the plays they have written and produced in the barn assisted by the neighbors. Another showed with great pride the picnic place in the "sugar bush" where at least once a week they had outdoor suppers fixed by the girls and shared sometimes by juvenile or adult guests. A boy told of a trip the family made to a clay bank and of the many queer and lovely articles the ones who enjoyed modeling made from the sticky gray treasure that they carried home. Some of us remember the story hour, the singing time, the hour after supper in the garden, the Sunday afternoon walks that were once a regular part of the day but are now cherished memories. This is leisure, earned by hours of good work and spent for the enrichment of daily living. In spite of proverbs and sage sayings one cannot save time. We spend it whether it suits us to or not. It behooves us then to plan a part of it for that best of all causes--human development--the enjoyment of family and of friends, the cultivation of individual talents and skills, the pursuit of those intangibles of which good living is made.

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